1: Powdermaker E-5 (1929-1930) 1933 OM10 New Ireland OM10
Lesu

practising magic of one kind or another, and only two are women. Of these, one knows love magic and the other medical spells. Magical knowledge is inherited, and the rule is that it be handed down in the female line, and thus stays within the clan. But in tracing how each magician received his magic, I found that it came just as often from a father as a maternal uncle or other clan relative. A magician makes a payment to the person teaching him the spells, and thereafter he guards his knowledge carefully, for as has already been shown the knowledge of magic is an economic asset.[1] Only one type of magic is usually known to a magician; for example, the rain magician will not know love magic. The exception is medical magic, which is more widely known, and so a man who is skilled in love spells may also know a few spells connected with medicine.

The thirteen magicians of Lesu form no separate class, and except for the additional prestige and income they receive they cannot be differentiated from other people. They participate fully in the daily routine of work, and a magician mends his house, clears the bush ground, brings in firewood, and looks after the baby, just as does the non-magician. A woman might know magic, but this does not exempt her from the daily toil of scraping taro. Both temperamentally and mentally the magician appears no different from any other native. He has merely inherited certain spells which he performs for himself when he needs them, or when he is paid by someone for his services. He does not seem to be of any particular type of personality. The magicians of Lesu varied widely in temperament. Some were serious and quiet, others were gay; some were exceptionally good craftsmen, and others were only mediocre. But all magicians, and non-magicians too, were equal in the sincerity of their belief in the efficacy of the magic.

The power of the magic lies in the muttered spell. The

[1] See chapter on Work.